

Documents

Declaration from Romanian Baptist

Recent information on relations between the Romanian Baptist Church and the State was given in RCL Vol. 1, No.6 (p. 19) and Vol. 2, No. 1 (p. 35). Many of the problems causing friction between the two bodies were solved earlier this year thanks to successful discussions held between Romanian Baptist leaders and the government Department of Cults. Nevertheless, to openly acknowledge faith in God as did Pavel Nicolescu, a graduate of the Baptist Theological Seminary in Bucharest, is still sometimes a costly act as shown in the following document.

My name is Pavel I. Nicolescu, a Baptist Christian, the son of working people, Ioan and Eleka Nicolescu, who are members of the Brethren Church in the Socialist Republic of Romania. I was born on 27 April, 1936 in the town of Ploesti. Two years after completing my military service (1961) I enrolled at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Bucharest from which I graduated in 1965. During the four years of the course my director and professor was Dr. Alexa Popovici, now pastor of the Romanian Church in Chicago, 1414 North Lockwood, Illinois 60651, USA.

After graduation I worked as an unskilled worker at a transport enterprise in the town of Hunedoara. Since 1967 I have been working at the Dundeni Clinical Hospital in Bucharest. In 1969 I entered the Philosophy Faculty of the University of Bucharest. During the four years of the course, I attended all classes regularly. This involved painstaking effort. Sometimes I worked on night shifts just in order to avoid missing classes. So I divided my time between classes, job and family. Only two weeks before the end of my last year I was expelled by the Rector's office of the University of Bucharest through "Order No. 177, dated 6 April, 1973", because, since I had graduated from a theological Seminary, I had openly acknowledged my faith in God when asked. In the "Order", contrary to rules, the Rector's office does not mention the reason for my expulsion, nor any law which might have served as the legal basis for it, since religious discrimination is illegal and punishable by the Constitution of Romania, art. 17. The "Order" also contradicts the Unesco Convention concerning the fight against discrimination in teaching, adopted in Paris, on 14 December 1960 and ratified by Romania through Decree No. 149 of 2 April 1964 (*Buletinul Oficial al Marii Adunari Nationale a Republicii Populare Romana* No. 5, 20 April, 1964). The Rector's office is obliged to state the reason for expelling a student, according to the stipulations of the "Rule book on the professional activity of students", approved by the Ministry of Education's Order No. 1689, 18 August 1972, art. 38, para. e.

When one looks at the formulation of this "Order" one sees that it is clearly illegal, without foundation and the outcome of discrimination. In spite of all efforts to obtain an annulment of "Order No. 177", I find myself after one year facing an impervious wall and repeatedly receiving a negative answer from all the authorities I consult. So far, I have written 49 documents (memoranda and petitions asking for an audience) of which 43 were sent to the Ministry of Teaching and Education and the Rector of the University of Bucharest.

My expulsion is not only contrary to existing laws in the Socialist Republic of Romania, and a flagrant breach of fundamental human rights, but it also contradicts the Plenum of the Romanian Communist Party's Central Committee, held from 22-25 April 1968. The Plenum stated: "nobody has the right to abuse in any way his position in State or Party in order to neglect the laws of the State and break the norms of our Socialist legality. No resolution or order issued by a person, regardless of his position, can be a substitute for the law. Each Party member, each citizen, is responsible for his actions and has the duty to act in accordance, and only in accordance, with the laws of the country."

The refusal to annul the expulsion "Order" is also illegal. The Plenum also stated: "Party, State and People's authorities, the leaders of institutions, enterprises and economic units are obliged to analyse, in the spirit of the existing norms and laws, and solve the problems raised by citizens through letters and audiences, and answer questions within the legal term; to take severe measures against those who give citizens answers in a formal manner and delay dealing with letters . . . Party and State activists, cadres with great responsibility from all walks of life - regardless of their position - have the duty of organizing an exemplary programme of audiences, and of being an example in the way they obey the laws and devotedly serve the interests of the population."

I worship and have fellowship with my brethren in the Baptist Church, "Holy Trinity", in Mihai Bravu Street, no. 106, Bucharest. In 1966 I married Ruth, a medical assistant, and have three children, aged from three to seven, Magdalena, Bogdan and Patricia.

In my earlier memoranda and petitions I asked and now request the Ministry of Teaching and Education and the Rector of the University of Bucharest to annul Order No. 177 of 6 April, 1973, on the basis of which I was expelled. I ask to be reinstated so that I can continue my studies and graduate from the Philosophy Faculty. This declaration does not ask for anything illegal, but only that a right be granted and recognized - the right to study - a right which is guaranteed by the laws of the Socialist Republic of Romania, without any discrimination, to all her citizens. Since all my efforts here to get a legal solution to my case have failed and since all doors have been closed to me, I have found myself compelled to send this declaration abroad for publication and for this I accept all responsibility.

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Pavel I. Nicolescu
Str. Vlad Judet No. 35
Sector 4 - Bucuresti
Republica Socialista Romania

Arrest of Russian Baptist Leader

Georgi Vins, a founder and leader of the Soviet so-called "reform" Baptists, or initsiativniki, was arrested in Kiev at the end of March this year. In 1966 Vins was arrested after a Baptist demonstration in Moscow outside the building of the Communist Party Central Committee. Later he was sentenced to three years